

# Inclusive Partnerships with Indigenous Communities and the BIPOC Workforce

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*Image credit: Polynesian Voyaging Society*



*Image credit: NASA*

## Gratitude to:

- NASA and its leadership for holding this day and this space (and a request)
- My deeply sustaining work-life ecosystem, including my collaborators who model inclusive transformative partnerships among our many human identities and knowledge systems
- *I respectfully acknowledge those whose ancestral homelands I am speaking on, the Coast Miwok and Ohlone of Northern California, and the traditional custodians of the land where each of you are*
- I also honor the courage and vision of many working on these issues, including those who could not be present at this meeting

# The Existential Crossroads We Are At

The dramatically accelerating fallout for our survival from:

- Climate Change
- Pandemics
- Economic inequality
- Digital Divide
- Systemic hurdles to inclusive excellence
- The rapid occupying of near-Earth space

Borne disproportionately by the same (BIPOC) communities

# Appeal, and Charge, to NASA Leadership

- Take on leadership role in targeted ways with some of these crises
- Review closely, and implement actionable recommendations from, **the many excellent State of the Profession white papers from Astro2020 and Planetary 2023**
- Who are the stakeholders for the future of NASA's initiatives that we are missing at the decision-making table?
- Translate NASA's Mission and values to diverse excellence in NASA's future workforce, and greater mission success
- **WE NEED YOU** – as a federal agency, you are accountable to us, unlike companies and private actors in space

# Actionable Items on the Ground

(we already know how to do most of these)

- Honor the long on-ramp, made longer in 2020, for the communities we need in our future workforce. Targeted solutions: funding \*now\* for early-career workforce, increase support for bridge programs and nontraditional students, recognize that the same pandemic/economic/SiP conditions will make some of the workforce disappear, potentially permanently, while maximizing productivity for a few
- Digital Chasm (Moses+2020): NASA can help with this
- Fund long-term relationship building and initiatives: offer 5-10 year interdisciplinary grants rooted in BIPOC communities, discourage last-min DEI partnerships in grants, review the reviewers, review the repeat applicants for whom an award would be a game-changer for their institution and community

# Transform Scientific Culture at NASA

- Recognize that science outcomes are inseparable from the scientists, and values of the scientific system
- **Reject divisive dualities** (science vs. culture) and siloed “monoculture” thinking – this is artificial and \*not\* how human beings achieve our best (often surprising) outcomes
- **Move from a transactional extractive mentality to true long-term thinking:** relational, ethical, consensus building
- Reward models of inclusive leadership
- **Please lead the world’s space agencies in establishing a Cultural Ethics/Protocol Office** – needed for the best outcomes from NASA’s inclusive workforce of tomorrow, including indigenous communities

# Communities, not Colonies, in Space

- Space is now the playground of billionaire investors and private companies. We need **consistent international regulatory and ethical standards that honor ALL stakeholders in dark skies and near-Earth space**
- **Space as an ancestral global commons for science AND culture** (Venkatesan+2020): We need YOUR advocacy
- **New anti-colonial treaties to replace the Outer Space Treaty** (lofty ideals but toothless). **Tavares+2020**. Move away from a first-come, first-claim race to ownership and occupying of space. Learn from the history of land treaties (recent majority opinion from SC Justice Gorsuch, *McGirt v. Oklahoma*)

# Dark Skies as a Human Right, Cultural Value of Moon and Celestial Objects

- Please act on this now – before irreversible changes
- Recognizing the importance of dark skies for scientific/cultural practices of ALL of humanity, indigenous peoples including wayfinders
- All our ancestors have been scientists and explorers – what can we learn from ALL traditions to maximize NASA Mission success?

Video: Marco Langbroek  
Reuters and NYT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytUygPqjXEc>



Image: Torsten Funke



# Looking Ahead

- Thank you for listening and for giving space and intentionality to these issues. **In gaining the stars, who are we losing?**
- This is our – human – journey. What will future scientists and storytellers say about what we did – and did not do – at this juncture in our collective history? Can we be the elders and leaders our future workforce deserves?
- **Please do this event again in a few months**

*I offer the lesson of the stone mason; the greatest works require a tremendous effort with surprising patience, one stone at a time.*

*- Paul Coleman, first Native Hawaiian to receive a doctorate in astrophysics*